

# AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

## COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate to conduct a hearing on Wednesday, April 22, 2009, at 10 a.m., in room SD-366 of the Dirksen Senate office building.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

## COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Environment and Public Works be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 22, 2009, at 10 a.m. in room 406 of the Dirksen Senate office building.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

## COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 22, 2009, at 9:30 a.m., to hold a hearing entitled "Global Climate Change: U.S. Leadership for a New Global Agreement."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

## COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 22, 2009, at 2:30 p.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

## COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 22, 2009, at 10 a.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

## COMMITTEE ON VETERAN'S AFFAIRS

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 22, 2009. The Committee will meet in room 418 of the Russell Senate office building beginning at 2:30 p.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

## SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, GOVERNMENT INFORMATION, FEDERAL SERVICES, AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, Federal Serv-

ices, and International Security be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 22, 2009 at 3 p.m., to conduct a hearing entitled, "Eliminating Waste and Fraud in Medicare and Medicaid."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

## SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS AND MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 22, 2009, at 10 a.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

## SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces of the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, April 22, 2009, at 9:30 a.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

## COMMENDING CAPTAIN RICHARD PHILLIPS, THE CREW OF THE MAERSK ALABAMA AND THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 108, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 108) commending Captain Richard Phillips, the crew of the "Maersk Alabama," and the United States Armed Forces, recognizing the growing problem of piracy off Somalia's coast, and urging the development of a comprehensive strategy to address piracy and its root causes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. LEAHY. Today I have submitted—along with Senators GREGG of New Hampshire, FEINGOLD of Wisconsin, KENNEDY and KERRY of Massachusetts, and, of course, my colleague, Senator SANDERS of Vermont—a Senate resolution on Captain Richard Phillips, the ship captain from Underhill, VT, who Somali pirates took hostage 2 weeks ago.

This resolution praises Captain Phillips for his selfless heroism—he offered himself in lieu of his crew as a hostage—his extraordinary rescuers, his family, and the Federal agencies that kept close watch on the captain while the pirates held him literally at gunpoint in an 18-foot lifeboat in the middle of the Indian Ocean.

This situation was an all too real drama that played out on the high seas. With grappling hooks and guns, Somali pirates took control of Captain Phillips' ship, the Maersk Alabama.

The 20-member crew of the 500-foot container ship retook control after a harrowing struggle.

But to protect his crew from further danger, Captain Phillips agreed to go with the pirates into a lifeboat where he was held hostage at gunpoint for 5 days. Displaying a resourcefulness and the indomitable spirit that speaks to the best qualities of Vermont, New England, and our great Nation, he attempted to escape. He kept his cool and confidence in the most volatile situation where the pirates, in a second, could have easily killed him.

The U.S. Navy arrived, headed up by the guided missile destroyer, USS Bainbridge, and when the captain faced imminent danger, snipers from one of our most elite military units, the Navy SEALs, killed his captors.

The entire country has shared feelings of admiration for the courage and fortitude of Captain Phillips, relief that he and his crew are safely home, and gratitude for the outstanding performance of the U.S. Navy, particularly the Bainbridge crew and the SEALs, for their rescue of the captain.

The Maersk Alabama incident is part of a troubling pattern of piracy that comes from the anarchy and the poverty plaguing Somalia. Pirates have taken hostage more than 200 crew members in dozens of countries. They have absconded with tens of millions of dollars in ransom, reinvesting that money into more advanced equipment and weapons, from guns to rocket-propelled grenades to global positioning systems.

The scale and intensity of the piracy is only getting worse, as this resolution underscores. This piracy has to be addressed.

But on that Wednesday, those pirates met their match, from Captain Phillips and his crew, to the remarkable Phillips family, to the formidable U.S. military, and the wider U.S. Government.

The President monitored the situation closely. He gave the necessary direction to the SEALs to use force if required to protect Phillips. The FBI provided guidance to the USS Bainbridge to deal with the hostage situation, while the Department of State kept the family informed.

Andrea Phillips, Captain Phillips' wife, was incredible throughout this crisis. I was receiving calls from the White House. I was told what was going on, as were my staff. I was calling Mrs. Phillips and talking with her. And the calmness of this woman, realizing the harrowing danger that her husband faced, and her respect for our Government's efforts to save him were remarkable—she repeatedly thanked the Navy personnel, the FBI, and others for keeping such close tabs on the situation. Even though this was an especially difficult experience for their two children, Daniel and Mariah, they weathered the crisis and had a happy reunion.

I look forward to the next time I take the ferry boat across Lake Champlain and Daniel is piloting it. I think one of the happiest moments was with several friends at Easter Mass on Easter Sunday. I talked with the White House earlier that morning, and I knew that things may come to a conclusion. But I turned my cell phone off while I was at Mass. I came out and there was a message from the White House: "He is safe." At the top, "He is safe." Then they filled me in on what happened.

I was telling my friends, my wife, Marcelle, who was with me. We were standing there in the parking lot cheering, laughing, tears. People were kind of looking at us wondering just what was going on. I called Mrs. Phillips, and she had the same reaction. Later the President called her, as he called her husband. The reunions last week with the crew arriving at Andrews Air Force Base, Captain Phillips stepping off the plane at the Burlington, VT, airport were moments of joy and relief.

The country is so proud of these Americans who certainly did not want to be at the center of an international crisis. But when they were, they rose to the occasion with the strength and bravery that represent the best of our country.

With this resolution, we commend Captain Phillips and his family, the crew of the Maersk Alabama, the U.S. Armed Forces, and the Navy SEALs for their heroism. This resolution has one message above all others: Welcome home.

I yield the floor.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I wish to say a few words on this resolution commending Captain Richard Phillips, the crew of the Maersk Alabama, and the U.S. Navy.

The resolution recognizes the growing problem of piracy in international waters off the coast of Somalia, a country that has been without a functioning central government since 1991.

The resulting lawlessness and the desperate humanitarian situation have turned the area into a base for pirate operations.

Earlier this month, Somali pirates used grappling hooks and weapons to board the cargo ship captained by Richard Phillips, who lives with his family in Underhill, VT. He led a crew of 19 on the vessel that was delivering food aid to starving people in eastern Africa.

Captain Phillips bravely led the crew in retaking control of the ship by offering himself as a hostage in exchange for the release of his crew.

Four pirates then took Captain Phillips into an 18-foot lifeboat, held him captive at gunpoint, and repeatedly threatened to kill him.

On Easter Sunday, Captain Phillips was rescued by Navy SEALs who determined that Captain Phillips was in imminent danger and took the lives of three of his pirate captors.

The people of Vermont are proud of the extraordinary courage of Captain

Phillips, the dignity of his family under great stress and the outstanding performance of the U.S. Navy and other governmental personnel in rescuing Richard and dispatching those who apprehended him.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Captain Phillips of Underhill, VT, held hostage by Somalians, where his own courage allowed the release of his crew, and the courage of the U.S. Navy and the courage of our military and the courage of our leadership, at the White House, the Department of Defense, and elsewhere brought about his release.

The Phillips family is a wonderful family. They live in a small and beautiful town in Vermont. There are few things that unite everybody. I can say as a lifelong Vermonter, I know my State is united in pride for Captain Phillips. All of us felt our prayers were answered on Easter Sunday when we received word that he was safe and was going back home. I know how much it meant to me to pick up the phone and call Mrs. Phillips, and the day before he arrived back home, to call her up and wish her a happy birthday and say: The best birthday present this Nation can give you is tomorrow afternoon at the Burlington Airport when your husband will arrive.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and that any statements relating to the resolution be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 108) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

#### S. RES. 108

Whereas Somalia has been without a functioning central government since 1991, resulting in lawlessness and an increasingly desperate humanitarian situation;

Whereas according to a Somali human rights group, violence during the period from 2007 to 2009 has killed an estimated 16,000 people, wounded more than 28,000 people, and displaced more than 1,000,000 people;

Whereas these grim conditions and the absence of a functioning government have made Somalia an ideal base for piracy operations and a fertile ground for terrorist organizations, including the group al-Shabaab, whose leaders have ties to al-Qaeda;

Whereas acts of piracy off the coast of Somalia have been on the rise for more than a year, with the International Maritime Bureau reporting an estimated 111 attacks in 2008;

Whereas on Wednesday, April 8, 2009, Somali pirates used grappling hooks and weapons to board the Norfolk, Virginia-based container ship Maersk Alabama, which was captained by Richard Phillips, a resident of Underhill, Vermont, and crewed by 19 other citizens of the United States, and which was delivering food aid from the World Food Programme to hungry people in east Africa;

Whereas Captain Phillips, a native of Winchester, Massachusetts and a 1979 graduate of the Massachusetts Maritime Academy,

bravely led the Maersk Alabama crew in successfully retaking control of the ship by offering himself as a hostage in exchange for the release of the crew;

Whereas 4 pirates took Captain Phillips into an 18-foot lifeboat, held him captive at gunpoint, and repeatedly threatened to kill him;

Whereas the United States Central Command dispatched to the scene the destroyer U.S.S. Bainbridge, which was joined in subsequent days by the U.S.S. Halyburton and the U.S.S. Boxer, along with Navy SEAL teams, Marine Corps helicopters, and other joint assets of the United States Armed Forces;

Whereas hostage recovery experts from the Federal Bureau of Investigations gave guidance to the crew of the U.S.S. Bainbridge, while the Department of State stayed in contact with Captain Phillips' family, including Phillips' wife Andrea and their 2 children, Daniel and Mariah, in Underhill, Vermont;

Whereas Maersk Limited, based in Norfolk, Virginia, worked diligently with the United States Armed Forces to try to obtain the release of Captain Phillips and the Maersk Alabama crew and to move the ship safely to port in Kenya, while sending personal representatives to Vermont to keep the Phillips family informed;

Whereas in the late evening of April 9, 2009, Captain Phillips made an escape attempt, jumping into the water of the Indian Ocean to swim for safety, only to be pursued by the pirates and quickly recaptured;

Whereas the President received regular briefings on the hostage crisis and provided the authority necessary for the United States Armed Forces to resolve it;

Whereas on April 12, 2009, Easter Sunday, Captain Phillips was rescued after the United States Armed Forces, which throughout the crisis spared no effort to defuse the situation and peacefully rescue Phillips, took the lives of 3 of the pirate captors when Phillips was seen to be in imminent danger; and

Whereas international commerce remains under threat while Somali pirates continue to hold for ransom more than 200 crew members of many nationalities: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That it is the sense of the Senate that—

(1) Captain Phillips deserves the respect and admiration of all people of the United States for his brave conduct under life-threatening circumstances;

(2) the Senate shares the sense of relief and gratitude felt by the family and shipmates of Captain Phillips;

(3) all members of the United States Armed Forces involved in the rescue operation, in particular members of the Navy and Navy SEAL teams who rescued Captain Phillips, the officials of other Federal Government departments and agencies who contributed, and the crew of the Maersk Alabama, are to be commended for their exceptional efforts and devotion to duty; and

(4) the President should work with the international community and the transitional government of Somalia to develop a comprehensive strategy to address both the burgeoning problem of piracy and its root causes.

#### CONGRATULATING THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA TAR HEELS

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 110, which was submitted earlier today.